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ABSTRACT

This report provides administrators and supervisors of reading programs with information to help them evaluate and select commercially developed reading materials. Part 1 opens with a description of the problems researchers studying the adoption of basal reading programs have observed and then offers suggestions (based on both research and experience) for the improvement of the adoption process. The importance of using reading materials other than the adopted programs is also discussed. The final section of Part 1 reviews the material used to teach reading in many middle and high schools. Part 2 contains a brief discussion of research on how teachers use reading materials in their classrooms and concludes with a section stressing the importance of staff training that has as its purpose the understanding and use of the new materials and other materials, and the importance of teacher decision-making. The report concludes with a set of guidelines for the selection and use of materials. (Forty-four references are attached.) (Author/RS)

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CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF READING

Technical Report No. 457

READING MATERIALS: THEIR SELECTION AND USE

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February 1989

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to provide administrators and supervisors of reading programs with information that will help them evaluate and select commercially-developed reading materials. Part 1 opens with a description of the problems researchers studying the adoption of basal reading programs have observed and then offers suggestions--based on both research and experience--for the improvement of the adoption process. The importance of using reading materials other than the adopted programs, is also discussed. The final section of Part 1 reviews the materials used to teach reading in many middle and high schools. Part 2 contains a brief discussion of research about how teachers use reading materials in their classrooms and concludes with a section stressing the importance of staff training that has as its purpose the understanding and use of new materials, other materials, and the importance of teacher decision-making. The chapter concludes with a set of guidelines for the selection and use of materials.

READING MATERIALS: THEIR SELECTION AND USE

For better or for worse, commercially developed materials determine the reading curriculum and the mode of reading instruction in the classrooms of many American schools. A number of classroom observation studies (Duffy & McIntyre, 1982; Hodges, 1980; Jackson, 1981; Woodward, 1986) reveal that classroom reading programs--from the primary grades through high school--are dominated by commercially developed reading materials. Some of these studies also reveal that, as teachers present these materials to their students, they follow to a greater or lesser degree the directions that appear in the teachers' guides that accompany the materials. In addition, classroom observations (and our own discussions with teachers) remind us that the content of the student textbooks, workbooks, and other student materials associated with commercially developed materials often comprises the bulk, if not the total, of what many students *read*, both in and out of school. We also point out the strong connection between what is taught in these programs and the tests that are used to evaluate reading instruction as well as the students getting the instruction.

We have come to believe, along with others in the field (Brophy, 1982; Resnick & Resnick, 1985), that because published reading materials are used so extensively by so many teachers and students, it makes sense to assume that the success of school reading programs will depend in part upon the quality and suitability of the materials selected for use in school districts. It also makes sense to assume that the success of school reading programs will depend to some degree upon how well--and to what extent--teachers and students use these materials.

This chapter contains information that will help school administrators and the supervisors of reading programs evaluate and select commercially developed reading materials, as well as support the successful use of these materials in the classrooms of the schools in their districts. The chapter contains three parts: the first part is about the evaluation and selection of reading materials for use in classroom reading programs; the second part discusses the appropriate use of these materials in elementary, middle, and secondary schools; and the last part summarizes our guidelines for the selection and use of materials.

Much of our discussion focuses on the selection and use of what Shannon (1987) labels "commercial reading materials." This category includes basal reading programs (and their many components, for example, teachers' guides, student readers, workbooks, skillbooks, and management systems), and those workbooks and skillbooks not associated with basal reading programs but which have been developed as supplemental activities. To this already rather large category we can easily add the reading laboratories, multilevel kits on specific skills and other types of programmed kits that students work through--for the most part--on their own. We concentrate on these materials because they are, and will probably continue to be, the major medium for the teaching of reading in American classrooms.

The primary goal of this chapter is to help administrators and supervisors deal with the reality of the reading materials that are used on a day-to-day basis in their school districts. This emphasis does not mean that we promote the *exclusive* use of such materials. In fact, we believe that the use of other types of reading materials should be a part of every school reading program. Certainly trade books (fiction and nonfiction) should be on the shelves of every classroom--and in fact these books should spend a good part of their time off the shelves and in the hands of the students. In addition, students should have easy access to appropriate reference books and to a variety of books from school libraries. What students read should also include teacher- and student-made materials, for example, student created books, student story charts, and teacher-made practice materials. We will also discuss these materials, although briefly.

The Evaluation and Selection of Reading Materials

From the McGuffey readers of the nineteenth century to the many and varied reading materials of the present, commercially developed reading programs have played an important role in American schools. Shannon (1987) reports that Nila Banton Smith--in her 1965 book on the history of reading instruction in American schools--devoted half of the book to a discussion of the development of commercial reading materials. It is only in the past decade, however, that the evaluation and selection of these materials have been topics of interest to researchers. The materials themselves, however, have long been of interest to two groups: the people who use them and the people who produce them.

Anyone who walks through an exhibit of commercially developed reading materials at a national or regional convention of the International Reading Association is likely to be fascinated by the number, variety, and beauty of the materials on display. Each publisher has an assortment of reading materials: There are materials for young children, elementary school students, and middle and high school students; in addition, there are materials for fast learning students and slow learning students--and for students who have not learned much and are to be taught remedially. And as mentioned above, each of these programs contain a number of components, including some practice exercises and management systems that flash on and off the computers that are a part of the display in the exhibit booth. Especially notable are the student textbooks. They are sturdily bound, with high quality paper that is printed in type sizes that vary with the grade level, and illustrated with colorful and stylish pictures. In fact, the graphics and layout of most of these programs are in keeping with the style of the glitzy magazines and gorgeous coffee table books to which our modern eyes have become accustomed.

Visitors to these exhibits usually leave the exhibit hall carrying shopping bags full of the glossy brochures and informational booklets handed out by the publisher's representatives. How do teachers and school administrators deal with such an array of materials? To our knowledge, the selection of reading materials rarely takes place in an exhibit hall, but rather begins someplace else, usually by means of a process labelled, aptly enough, textbook adoption. Where that process begins, however, depends upon in which state the members of the adoption committee live.

In some states, called adoption states, commercially developed reading materials are first examined by a statewide adoption committee which selects the materials that will appear on the state approved list of programs. Then the adoption committees of local school districts (and sometimes schools within districts), determine which of the state approved programs will be used in their districts. In other states, labeled by publishers as "open territory," commercially developed reading materials are selected by entire school districts or by individual schools within a district. Because there is no "state list," these committees can select from any program on the market.

A discussion of how state adoption committees work and the advantages and disadvantages of a state adoption process is not the intent of this chapter. Instead, we focus on the school and district level adoption of commercially developed reading programs. This focus will be relevant to people who live in either adoption states or open territory states, as commercially developed reading materials are selected at the school or district level in all states. In adoption states, schools or school districts go through an adoption process to select programs from the state-approved list.

Although district wide adoption is common--and a district can be a city, a county, or a specially organized public or church related school entity--some districts permit each school within the district to choose its reading materials. In such cases, School A four blocks from School B may have completely different reading materials. But, because district adoption is more common, and because the repetition of "school or district" becomes awkward, we refer only to *district* in the rest of this chapter. Depending upon the unit our readers typically deal with, however, *district* can be read as district or school.

Most districts take the task of selecting commercially developed reading materials very seriously, and create special textbook adoption committees to evaluate and then select the materials for the entire

district. How do committees go about evaluating and selecting materials? What do the leaders of the committees do? How do the committees organize to review materials, make decisions, and get teachers knowledgeable about the newly selected materials? To discuss these questions we will draw from a small, but growing, body of research on the textbook selection process and from the practical experience of people who have lead adoption committees. The research we discuss focuses on the evaluation and selection of basal reading programs, not materials for older students. The concerns addressed by these researchers, however, are probably of some relevance to the evaluation and selection of most commercially developed reading materials.

Basal Program Materials

Ideally, it would seem that adoption committees should examine and evaluate each program on the market. Then, using objective criteria, committees would reach agreement about which materials were of the highest instructional quality and most suitable for the particular needs of the teachers and students in their district. That program would then be adopted. The reality, however, seems far from the ideal.

Problems in adoption practices. In a series of studies, Farr and his colleagues examined the process used in the selection of basal reading programs (Courtland, Farr, Harris, Tarr, & Treece, 1983; Farr & Tulley, 1985; Farr, Tulley, & Rayford, 1987; Powell, 1985; Tulley, 1985). These and other studies (Dole, Rogers, & Osborn, 1987b; Marshall, 1987) indicate that numerous factors can adversely affect the selection of textbooks. Some of these are *outside* pressures such as the presentations of publishers' representatives and the influence of particular vocal groups of citizens. Other factors are *inside* factors such as inadequate criteria for evaluating textbooks, inadequately trained committees, and inadequate evaluation tools.

Several of these researchers have commented on a tool adoption committees frequently use to examine materials--the checklist. Checklists containing criteria that have to do with a number of aspects of the materials (for example, content of student books, quality of illustrations, amount of comprehension instruction) are often devised by committees. The criteria on the checklists are what committee members consider as they examine the materials; the checklists are also the forms on which information about each publishers' materials is recorded.

Farr and Tulley (1985) pointed out that checklists encourage committee members to check off the listing of skills or topics in scope and sequence charts rather than encouraging them to examine the instructional quality of those skills or topics in the teacher and student materials. We would like to expand on this point. A checklist might, for example, include an item such as "develops higher level comprehension skills at the literal, inferential, and applied levels." We believe such items tend to promote a superficial look at programs. The first problem is the vagueness of the item; what should higher level comprehension skills look like in a basal reading program? All basal programs claim to develop higher level comprehension skills. How can such vague language help evaluators differentiate one program from another? Committee members can easily look up higher level comprehension skills in the scope and sequence charts, find these skills "covered" on many pages in the program, and conclude that the program develops these skills. What is being evaluated though, is the *appearance* of topics and *not* how well they are translated into instruction or other learning experiences. Comas (1983) found another aspect of checklists disturbing. She reviewed checklists from a number of school districts and found them to be inadequate for evaluating the *instructional quality* of basal textbooks. She found, for example, that although 71% of the checklists she examined included references to racial or sexual stereotyping, only 34% of the items referred to criteria about instructional quality.

Perhaps it is because of the inadequacy of the checklists, the inadequate amount of time allocated to the task, and in some cases, the lack of preparation of the committee members that caused one researcher to conclude that committee members often end up making subjective evaluations, or choosing the basal textbooks that most closely resemble the materials they are currently using (Powell,

1986). Powell (1986) concluded that the selection of basal programs is based more on peripheral rather than important issues.

Given the problems that have been identified by research on the adoption process, how can the process be made more effective? The authors of this chapter have been involved with adoption committees in several school districts in several states. This work was in conjunction with the tryout of a set of booklets developed to provide both research information and evaluation procedures for committees examining basal reading programs. The booklets and the work with these committees are described elsewhere (Dole, Rogers, & Osborn, 1987a); we will, however, offer some general advice for the improvement of the adoption process derived from our experiences with the committees, our conversations with school administrators concerned with the adoption process, and our review of the literature on adoption.

Background questions. We begin by discussing three questions frequently raised by teachers and administrators: (a) Are all published reading materials more or less the same? (b) Should our district adopt one set of materials or do we need a multiple adoption? and (c) How many components of commercially developed materials do we really need?

Associated with the first question is usually the subliminal belief (and sometimes quite obvious hope) that the materials are all more or less the same and that there is therefore little point to expending school personnel effort and spending school district money on a time-consuming adoption process. Follet (1985) and Winograd (1987) report that many teachers feel that the major basal reading programs are all alike. That belief is not unique to the teachers in that study. We have heard similar statements many times. On the other hand--and quite predictably--publishers of these programs argue strongly that programs are *not* all alike. A perfunctory look at several programs easily affirms that most basal reading programs have certain physical similarities such as teachers' guides, student textbooks, workbooks, ancillary materials, and full color art, and a perusal of their scope and sequence charts confirms that most of them "cover" a similar sounding set of topics such as word identification, vocabulary development, comprehension instruction, and higher-order thinking skills.

We suggest, however, that a more careful analysis of the *content* of the materials reveals that there are significant differences among programs. The most obvious differences are in the varying approaches taken to the teaching of beginning reading. In addition, the content of the student readers and workbooks also varies considerably from program to program, and increasingly, the kind and amount of direction given for comprehension instruction and vocabulary development. The committees we worked with found that it often took careful examination to reveal some of the sometimes subtle, but often important, differences among basal reading programs. We also suggest that the new editions of the late 80's contain, at least for some publishers, significant departures from previous editions. So, our answer to the question, "Are they all the same?" is that basal reading programs of different publishers vary in enough ways to be called "different." We suspect the same is true of other types of commercially developed reading materials. We therefore suggest that school district administrators support a meaningful effort to evaluate the materials available to them in order to determine which publishers' materials will most positively affect the quality of instruction in the classrooms of their district.

This advice brings up the question about a single or multiple adoption. Should every school in the district use the program of a single publisher? Or, should a "multiple-basal" strategy be utilized in which teachers have available to them different materials to use with different groups of students? We know of no research that supports or refutes the value of using a single basal reading program in a district, as compared to two or more programs. We observe, however, that some district administrators and supervisors are often adamant that a single series be adopted. Their argument is usually that consistency of materials across schools is vital, particularly in districts that have a lot of students who move from school to school during the school year. On the other hand, administrators and supervisors who support the use of more than one publisher's materials argue that it is

unreasonable to expect that one published program will meet the needs of all of the students in a district and that a multiple adoption provides for a better match of students with materials.

Since there is no definitive research on this question, we suggest that the decision to adopt one more basal reading program or several be based upon the experiences and beliefs of the teachers and administrators within a district, the size and diversity of the district, the number of students who move from school to school within the year, the instructional needs of the students, and the features of the materials being considered.

The final question is really about *how much*. How many of the many available components of a basal reading program are really needed for their effective use in classrooms? Again, we know of no compelling research on this topic, but we observe that most districts begin a new adoption with a core of materials that include student textbooks, teachers' manuals, student workbooks, and placement and assessment instruments. We echo the warnings of classroom observers (e.g., Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1984) and caution against the all too frequent heavy reliance upon workbooks. We also suggest, as discussed earlier in this paper, that trade books and other kinds of printed materials be purchased as valuable supplements to basal reading programs; perhaps these may be more valuable than many of the supplemental components of basal reading programs.

Adoption Procedures

We next discuss the heart of the adoption process--what the committee members do, and how the work gets done. Although the procedures, membership, and policies of adoption committees differ from school district to school district, most committees are similar in their ultimate goal: They must choose the materials that will be used in the classrooms of their districts. To accomplish this task, once they are assembled and organized, most adoption committees follow some variation of these steps: The leader and the committee gather reports of information about reading research (from the literature, a school district expert or a consultant) and about materials (usually from publishers' representatives); they meet to establish criteria; they examine and evaluate materials, and then they select the materials that best match the criteria they established. Further discussion of some of these procedural matters follows.

Gathering information. Most textbook adoption committees feel the need to update their own knowledge of current research and practice before they begin to evaluate reading materials. We suggest that several members of the committee be assigned to report on the implications for instruction of recent and well documented research. Another possibility is to enlist the help of a local reading expert, such as a reading coordinator or a reading teacher particularly interested in research. Some committees hire outside experts.

Developing criteria. After committee members feel that they have enough information, they must decide what to look for as they evaluate materials. We urge that they develop criteria that emphasize research-based information about effective instruction. These criteria must be supplemented with practice-based criteria that reflect the needs of the district and the experiences of the committee members.

Establishing evaluation procedures. Once committee members decide on criteria for evaluating materials, they must develop a systematic way of organizing and recording the information they find. We urge not only that the criteria devised to analyze and record information focus on topics of *importance*, but also that the procedures used to evaluate the correspondence between the criteria and the materials focus on the *content* of the materials and not on the appearance of labels in scope and sequence charts (Dole, et al., 1987a; Farr, Tulley & Powell, 1987).

Committee Leaders

There is no substitute for an effective leader who can organize an adoption committee, develop a reasonable time line, keep the committee on task, and help the group synthesize the information it has gathered. Our experience indicates that leaders do not necessarily have to be reading experts, as long as they can effectively organize and manage the committee--and have access to people who are knowledgeable about reading. Here are some suggestions leaders may find to be of value.

Provide expert advice. While the committee leader does not have to be knowledgeable about reading, there must be someone available who is. That person should assist the committee leader in answering questions committee members might have, and, equally importantly, in providing information that will upgrade the committee's knowledge about effective reading instruction.

Divide the labor. Because examining and evaluating materials is so time-consuming, committees should divide the work among group members--sometimes by grade level, sometimes by topic, sometimes by different publishers. This division of labor avoids the overwhelming task of having every member of the committee examine every topic at every grade level in every set of materials being considered for adoption. Some researchers (Farr, Tulley & Powell, 1987) recommend that subcommittees should not be based on the usual grade level subcommittees, but rather on areas of committee members' expertise or interest, for example, beginning reading instruction, comprehension instruction, content of student readers, higher-order thinking skills. In any case, committee members should be able to provide specific evidence from the teachers' guides, student readers and workbooks to support their conclusions. Leaders need to show committee members how to do this and periodically check to make sure they follow through.

Organize the data. Once the examination process comes to a close, the subcommittees will have compiled a mass of forms and data about the programs they have evaluated. The leader must find ways to organize and synthesize this information. Leaders are also instrumental in determining how final decisions will be made and that the information will be delivered to the administration and the rest of the district. Committee members need to keep teachers at each school in the district informed about the evaluation and selection process. Leaders need to follow-up with committee members to make sure they are doing so.

Give committees power. Leaders of textbook adoption committees must see to it that adoption committees have the power to make the final selection. When committee members go through a careful evaluation process to reach a decision, their decision must not be undermined by "higher up" administrators who decide, for whatever reasons, to ignore the committee's decision. It is up to the leader of the committee to ensure that statements of the administration's budgetary constraints and any other constraints are explicit. Assuming that the committee operates within these constraints, and that their evaluation process is a reasonable one, committees' recommendations must be considered as binding. When this *does not* happen, adoption committees will very quickly lose the motivation to expend time and effort on the adoption process.

Suggestions for Improvement

We move now to some suggestions that administrators, supervisors, and leaders of adoption committees may find useful. These suggestions are, for the most part, derived from experience--and from the school of hard knocks.

Know the district personnel. Up-to-date information about the teachers and students who will be using the materials is essential. The goal of an adoption process is that teachers will have the best materials available to them. But, if teachers are not willing to use the materials that are adopted, no matter how good the materials, then nothing will be accomplished. Information about the attitudes and needs of the teachers who will be using the materials will inform administrators and supervisors

about the kinds of materials most likely to be used successfully in the classrooms of the district. This kind of knowledge can only be gained from visits to schools, observations of classrooms, and discussions with teachers. Questionnaires can be helpful but are not always reliable. Sometimes teachers say one thing when responding to a questionnaire but do quite another thing in their classrooms. Nothing can replace the kind of first-hand knowledge that one reading coordinator describes (Spangler, 1987):

> As you move from school to school, talk with teachers about the materials they are currently using and about their satisfaction with those materials. Then talk with administrators and get their impressions as well. Before you leave each school, check out the materials storeroom. See what reading supplies and materials are being used, and, more importantly, not being used. Once I went into a materials storeroom and found several expensive and excellent boxes of language materials unopened. At the same time I found the ditto master phonics worksheets in very short supply. This type of information can tell you a lot about what teachers are likely to use and not use. (Personal communication)

Know the district. A second, related kind of knowledge is accurate and realistic knowledge of the district in which the materials will be used. At the most obvious level, it is necessary to know the district's budget. The budget will almost always restrict the range and quantity of materials that can be purchased. Equally important is to acknowledge the real educational needs of the district. For example, a district's ethnic and cultural diversity will affect the kinds of materials that will be adopted. A district with a high proportion of Spanish-speaking students, for example, might adopt Spanish reading materials. A district with a high proportion of "at-risk" primary grade students may adopt special language development materials.

Know the district's history. Information about the history of the district is also important. Knowing about the past will make it possible to understand why, for example, the teachers in a particular school shy away from the use of trade books in the classroom (several years ago some parents adamantly objected to some books assigned for class reading). Or, knowledge about a district's history will help members understand why an adoption committee is unmotivated and negative (their past decisions have been consistently overridden by administrative changes and budgetary constraints).

Knowing the history of the district can prevent costly mistakes. We know of one school with a large number of "at-risk" children. That particular school was known for its reliance on a particular publisher's materials, *and* for the success of those materials with its students. The district adoption committee chose another basal reading program for the rest of the district, but agreed that this school should continue to use the materials they were used to. The committee could have forced that school to change materials. However, they knew the history of the school well enough to know that nothing would have been accomplished by such a decision, and that, in fact, the teachers in that school would simply have put the new program in their closets and continued to use their old materials.

Concerns about implementation. How will change come about and how will reading instruction ever be improved if teachers never go beyond what they are used to? We have suggested that it is of the utmost importance to find out what teachers are using and what they want. But it is also important to realize that moving teachers from the materials they are familiar with to something new requires careful staff development. Simply purchasing new materials, no matter how good they are, is unlikely to change what teachers do. If teachers do not want the materials, or do not know how to use them, the new materials will be closeted and the teachers will return to what they have used before. Regardless of the materials that are chosen, teachers will need continued staff development and support as they implement the new materials in their classrooms.

An important part of staff development is helping teachers to use basal materials appropriately. Using these materials appropriately means using them as part of a total reading program (Anderson et al.,

1984; Farr & Tulley, 1985). Unfortunately, in some schools these programs are the *only* resource for reading instruction. Researchers and reading educators believe that students whose only reading is in commercial reading programs can easily draw the conclusion that reading is what you do in a reading circle when you read aloud from a basal reader. We believe members of adoption committees, as well as administrators and supervisors, should be concerned with what *else* students read in classrooms. The next section discusses those materials.

Other Reading Materials for Elementary Schools

Common sense and good teaching practice dictate that students must read from a variety of materials--not just their basal readers. Recent research (Anderson, et al., 1984) has documented what many teachers have observed for years--that students often separate what they learn in a textbook from what they know in their real life. By bringing a variety of reading materials to the classroom, teachers make available to their students the real-world applications of reading. When students read "real" books, newspapers and magazines, follow directions for making things, figure out how things work, and look up information in reference books, they learn about the functions of reading.

Another reason for including more than the content of basal readers in a reading program is that students need access to the best of children's literature. Although most basal reading programs include excerpts from children's classics, these excerpts are often shortened and adapted. Davison (1984), Bruce (1984), and Green (1984) point out some of the negative effects of these adaptations. For example, the watered-down language often actually increases the conceptual difficulty, and the removal of paragraphs and sentences often inhibits insight into characters' motives and their interpersonal conflicts. In fact, one researcher, Bruce (1984), is so concerned about the effects of adaptations that he advises that teachers who want their students to have experience with the kinds of stories and books they will encounter as they mature *must* have them read trade books as well as the stories in their basal textbooks.

Students should also have the opportunity to read other students' writing. Materials that students write can be "published" and shared and read by class members, and should play an important role in what students read during the day. Graves and his colleagues (Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983; Hansen & Graves, 1983) report success in developing reading and writing classrooms that enhance students' reading as well as writing.

Specific criteria for selecting additional reading materials are difficult to set forth. Administrators and reading specialists can be guided by experienced and knowledgeable librarians and media specialists. We make a few suggestions:

1. Choose a variety of materials from different genres.
2. Include informational and at-home reading materials (newspapers, children's magazines, "How-to" books).
3. Include reading materials that cover a wide range of reading abilities.
4. Consult published, recommended book lists for suggestions of appropriate books.
5. Include classic literature to read to children as well as to have children read.
6. Display, share and include children's written works as part of the reading materials.

Materials for Middle and Secondary Reading Programs

While reading instruction has a clear function in elementary schools, its function at the middle and secondary school levels is less clear. Most middle and secondary schools do have some kind of separate reading course (Greenlaw & Moore, 1982). But according to Witte and Otto (1981) these courses differ in content and organization because they are designed to meet different kinds of student needs. Singer and Donlan (1980) classified nine different types of reading programs in use in middle and secondary schools. We have chosen to discuss three of their classifications below.

Reading laboratories. One of the most popular forms for secondary reading programs is the reading laboratory. Singer and Donlan (1980) describe a typical reading laboratory as an individualized reading class filled with a variety of self-instructional commercial reading kits. Students are placed in the kits according to their current reading level and work through the materials at their own pace. The students typically read short stories or paragraphs, answer questions about what they have read, complete additional vocabulary or word recognition exercises, correct their work, and record their progress. Students work through the kits on their own, often receiving little or no direct instruction from the teacher.

Functional reading programs. Singer and Donlan (1980) describe functional programs as those designed to teach students the kind of functional reading that adults do at home or at work. These programs sometimes use materials developed from real-world print, such as newspapers, telephone directories, tickets, maps, and theatre and sports events. Singer and Donlan also describe several prepackaged kits designed to help students develop functional reading skills. These kits simulate real-print, but in the form of dittos and worksheet pages.

Three stage programs. Some schools have reading programs for low, average, and high achievers. Often a remedial class may resemble a reading clinic with tutoring and individualized instruction. An average class often resembles a developmental program in which students are assigned to reading labs. Students in the advanced class are sometimes assigned to speed reading classes or to advanced study skills programs.

How can appropriate materials be selected for middle and secondary reading programs? To prepare for the adoption of new materials, administrators and supervisors should determine the kind of reading courses that are in place, the instructional needs of their students, and any changes they wish to make with respect to how reading is taught. A discussion of these issues is presented in Chapter 5. We will concentrate on the selection of materials for different types of programs.

We suggest that administrators and supervisors be extremely selective when considering the purchase of commercial reading materials for the middle and secondary school levels. The tendency in many districts is to let the materials dictate both the curriculum and the form of instruction. This practice is of serious concern. Programs with little or no teacher instruction run counter to research on the value of direct teacher explanation and instruction (Brophy & Good, 1986; Rosenshine & Stevens, 1986) and the research on socially mediated learning (Brown & Campione, 1984). Findings from a substantive body of research suggest that classrooms in which teachers provide strategies, offer guided practice, and regular feedback result in higher achievement in a number of different contexts. Additionally, classrooms in which teachers interact with students in a way that gradually transfers the "ownership" of skills and strategies from the teachers to students increases achievement (Pearson & Dole, 1987; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). Instruction based on these research findings is not likely to take place in reading programs in which students work individually in commercially developed kits .

Another concern is that many middle and secondary commercial reading programs isolate specific reading skills from the context of real reading (Pearson & Dole, 1987). Students can spend countless hours filling out endless worksheet pages on main ideas, drawing conclusions, and sequencing without understanding how these skills relate to the reading process and to their daily lives. Yet another--and

related--concern about the use of these materials is that of transfer. Research indicates that increases in students' reading achievement often do not transfer to their subject matter achievement (Herbert, 1984; Singer & Donlan, 1980). That is, many students who attend and make progress in special reading classes do not seem to read their content area textbooks with any more success. This observation is not only current but also has been evidenced for decades.

What materials *should* be used in middle and secondary school reading programs? Our suggestions are that, in addition to any kits and study skill programs, classrooms should contain (a) environmental print materials so students can relate reading to their daily lives, for example, newspapers, magazines, and driver's license manuals; (b) tradebooks, both classics and current, as well as a variety of popular books of varying reading difficulty; (c) content area textbooks that students use in their subject matter classes; and (d) content area trade books on different topics to supplement the content textbooks used in the subject matter courses.

Our two main suggestions to supervisors and administrators are to (a) offer materials that provide for the type of reading students will do in their daily lives, and (b) provide direct and explicit instruction for small and large groups on how to read these materials.

Putting Reading Materials to Use

Once reading materials have been selected, how do they get used by teachers and students? This question has only very recently been addressed in the literature. A few studies have directly addressed the question of how teachers actually use reading materials. Observations by several researchers (Duffy & McIntyre, 1982; Durkin, 1984; Shannon, 1983, 1987; Woodward, 1986) indicate a noticeable discrepancy between how teachers use reading materials and how those researchers think materials ought to be used.

Duffy and McIntyre (1982) found that teachers relied heavily on commercial reading materials (especially the teachers' manuals) for planning and conducting reading instruction, and that their teaching followed closely the recommendations in the teachers' manuals. They observed that typical teaching routines consisted of asking the questions provided in the teachers' guides, eliciting answers from students, and assigning workbook pages. Often, establishing background, purpose-setting, and other forms of assistance were omitted. These researchers concluded that teachers were task monitors and managers rather than active decision-makers and instructors. Duffy, Roehler, and Putnam (1987) observed that, regardless of the grade level, "many teachers of reading simply follow instructional materials and make few decisions about what to teach or how to teach it" (p. 359).

Why do so many teachers use textbooks so trustingly? Perhaps it is because many of them have been told to teach "by the book." Duffy, Roehler, and Wesselman (1985) found that teachers felt constrained by administrators to follow commercial reading program directives. One teacher in their study said, "We've been told to do it the way the basal says." Shannon (1983) reported similar findings and suggests that teachers follow the manuals closely because they believe their administrators want them to.

Another reason for teachers' heavy reliance on commercial reading materials may be their belief that the materials have been written by experts and are therefore better than anything that they, the teachers, could produce. Shannon (1983, 1987) reported that teachers and administrators believe in the scientific nature of the reading materials they use. He observes that they "treat the directives in teachers' manuals as the science of reading instruction" (1987, p. 314), and he is concerned that this type of thinking moves the focus of reading instruction from a human undertaking to a scientific undertaking.

Other researchers point out that teachers' use of commercial reading materials also has to do with the time constraints of the classroom and the complexity of designing instructional materials and making

instructional decisions (Duffy, Roehler, & Putnam, 1987). Time constraints mean that teachers often use what is readily available and limit the extent to which they design their own instructional programs. Experienced teachers point to the enormous amounts of time needed to create even simple worksheets and games, let alone to develop materials for a complete reading program.

Our own experiences confirm these observations and those of other researchers (Apple & Teitelbaum, 1986; Duffy & Ball, 1986; Stern & Shavelson, 1983) who point to the heavy cognitive demands placed on teachers on a day-to-day basis. Teachers face the complexities of managing an entire class, meeting schedule demands, meeting the needs of many students and also teaching content. Some researchers claim that these heavy demands make it more likely that teachers become technicians who simply *manage* instruction, rather than decision-makers who *actively engage in* instruction. It is not difficult to conclude that teachers have jobs that are both time and labor intensive and that their reliance on help from published materials is not unreasonable.

We acknowledge what these studies, as well as common sense, indicate with respect to the demands placed on teachers, but still propose that the exclusive and indiscriminate use of commercially developed reading materials is neither advisable nor desirable. Commercial reading materials, no matter how well developed, can never fit the many situations in which they are used in classrooms. Furthermore, these materials do not represent the full range of reading experiences that schools should give students.

What can administrators and supervisors of reading programs do to help teachers use instructional materials more appropriately? First, they must help teachers recognize good instruction. The adoption of a new basal reading program is a good time for district-wide staff development. The reading specialists we talked to stressed the necessity of appropriate staff training once new materials have been adopted. Sometimes, publishers' representatives provide training (as compared to sales pitches) in the use of their materials. Administrators and supervisors need to discuss with them the kind of staff training that will accompany the purchase of basal reading programs. Sometimes, the district develops a training program, often with the help of outside consultants.

We believe that teachers need to think in ways that will permit them to look critically at their materials and at their instruction. The training should emphasize the importance of instructional decision-making. Teachers should understand the purpose and content of the materials and then be encouraged to make their own decisions about how to use them most appropriately. A series of meetings might begin with discussions about what's most important to teach at different grade levels. Teachers can then meet in subgroups by grade levels to discuss the kinds of instructional decisions they need to make on a day-to-day basis. Such discussions can be about, for example:

1. The match between students and materials.
2. The appropriate pacing of students through materials.
3. The appropriate amount of time spent in the direct instruction of important reading skills.
4. The appropriate use of teachers' guides and manuals.
5. The use of materials other than the basal textbooks.

Such discussions can do much to help "reskill" teachers and put them back in their role as instructional decision-makers.

Commercial reading materials, when used judiciously and in combination with other reading materials, can be of great help to teachers of reading. Administrators and supervisors of reading programs have a very important role to play in the evaluation and selection of these materials, and in the selection of

other supplementary materials. They also play an important role in providing a forum for the discussion of commercially-developed reading materials and the function of those and other materials in the total reading program, whether that program be for elementary school, middle school, or high school.

Guidelines for the Selection and Use of Materials

1. Because the differences among the published materials of different publishers are often marked, the careful evaluation of these materials is warranted.

2. The decision to adopt one publisher's commercially developed reading materials for an entire district or several publishers' (single or multiple adoption) should depend upon the experiences and beliefs of the district personnel, the size and diversity of the district, the characteristics of the students, and the features of the materials.

3. The "core" materials of most programs include the student textbooks, teachers' manuals, student workbooks, and placement and assessment instruments; an over-reliance on workbooks should be avoided; committees should reserve funds for the purchase of other kinds of reading materials.

4. Members of adoption committees must review current reading research before beginning an evaluation process.

5. The criteria developed for program evaluation should include research-based information as well as the practice- and experience-based information of members of the committee.

6. An effective committee leader must organize the committee; develop, and keep to, reasonable time lines, divide the labor, keep committee members on task, and help the group synthesize the information it has gathered.

7. Knowledge of the district--its personnel, its history, and its context--is essential to a successful adoption.

8. The decisions of adoption committees who have worked within the constraints of a district, and who have followed a reasonable evaluation process, should be binding.

9. The selection of materials must be accompanied by plans for in-service training in the use of the materials and in teacher decision making.

10. The selection of materials at any level should assume the classroom use of materials other than the adopted reading materials, for example, trade books, magazines, and newspapers.

11. The selection of materials for middle school and high school students should assure that the students are provided with a variety of reading materials that they will encounter in their daily lives and explicit instruction in how to read them.

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